

4
~~122~~
cop. 3

THE ENGLISH LEAFLET

THE NEW ENGLAND
ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

ORGANIZED FEBRUARY 28, 1901

E. CHARLTON BLACK, PRESIDENT

F. W. C. HERSEY, SEC'Y AND TREAS.

CHARLES SWAIN THOMAS, EDITOR

Editorial correspondence should be sent to the Editor, Charles Swain Thomas, at Newtonville, Mass.; business correspondence should be sent to the Secretary-Treasurer, F. W. C. Hersey, at 17 Lawrence Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

VOL. XIV.

DECEMBER 1914

NUMBER 122

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF THE MOTION PICTURE

GEORGE OLIVER SPAULDING.

The whole subject of the motion-picture is so new, and the questions arising from our relations and reactions to it are so vaguely comprehended, that no one may as yet speak with authority; and every man's opinion is welcome, as contributing to a final clearing up of the matter. It is, therefore, with no pretense to more than the average knowledge and understanding of the questions involved, but rather with a sense of embarking on an uncharted sea, that the present notes are set down. The writer knows something of the film world and its ways from the inside; and acknowledges a keen interest in the utilization of this novel force to the best possible ends; that is his sole claim on your attention.

It is unnecessary to point out the amazing growth, during the past five years, in the number of motion-picture theatres and in the size of their public; and it is futile to deny the consequent growth in popular influence that has been their lot. These things have become familiar facts in our daily life, and platitudes in our conversation. They are phenomena whose manifestations are not affected by our willingness or reluctance to acknowledge them; they are, and give every evidence that they will continue to be, world without end.

The question to be raised, therefore, is not—Shall we utilize the motion-picture in education?—but—How shall we utilize it in the best way for education? That is, this force exists and is operating; if we do not direct it into the right chan-

nels, it will sweep into the wrong ones, and tear down we know not how many of our carefully built dikes. We are not yet concerned, be it marked, with the use of the motion-picture in formal pedagogy, but with its utilization for the furtherance of the aims of education.

These aims, at least from the layman's point of view, are two: toward the Intelligence and toward the Imagination: and its tools are information and stimulation.

Now, the motion-picture has hitherto been exploited by men whose primary concern was a large and immediate financial return. The business of making, marketing, and exhibiting films is almost completely controlled by men deplorably lacking in cultivation and taste, and therefore quite blind to the finer possibilities of the instrument which their acumen has placed in their hands. This condition of affairs is fully revealed by the floods of worthless and sensational clap-trap that is constantly being "released" for the market; and in the vulgar and often objectionable methods of its exploitation and exhibition.

Sporadic attempts have been made by certain of the more prominent manufacturers to build up their educational departments, but these ventures, so far as the present writer knows, have uniformly met with ill-favor and ultimate collapse. The reason is not far to seek; and the fault lies probably on both sides. In the first place, the men in charge of film ventures are neither by temperament nor by education fitted to undertake such a task; and, again, few indeed are the educators who realize the urgency of the situation or have the courage to co-operate with the pioneers in this field.

It is only fair to say that there are to-day signs that the old order in the film world is slowly changing; and the entrance into the American field of several of the European firms who produce thoroughly artistic pictures is another encouraging sign of a change in the popular attitude, a change which will inevitably result in the re-organization of the entire business.

Notwithstanding the state of affairs that has obtained in manufacturing and controlling circles, there are in existence, and in use, a large number of worthy and well-made films, that may pertinently be mentioned here. Of pictures that may properly be called "informative" there are several valuable classes, such as scientific, travel, industrial, and news pictures. The films whose function is primarily "stimulative" will need to be discussed more carefully; but a word of description of these "informative" films may not be out of place.

Many scientific pictures have been made, some of them very painstakingly, and are occasional pleasant surprises in almost any motion-picture theatre; though the managers regard them as worthless, fit only for "padding" a program. Films depicting the life history and habits of animals, the growth of plants, and some of the simpler natural phenomena, seem to predominate among those now available; and the greater fields of modern science and its wonders have scarcely been touched.

There are many so-called "industrial" films, showing the processes of some of our great industries. One, in particular, has gone the rounds of the motion-picture theatres throughout the country, and has acquainted thousands of people with the interesting stages of the manufacture of shoes, from the raw leather to the finished product. The Government purposes to exhibit at the Panama-Pacific Exposition, a film recording the progress of a letter from the mail box into which it is dropped, to the door where it is finally delivered. The possibilities of films of this sort are tremendous; it is worth much to catch from time to time such illuminating glimpses of the marvelous sub-division and inter-relation of function upon which our complex society is founded. The evils of pictures of this sort are easily avoided, since they result from the facility with which the films may be used, as advertizing exploitations, and are patent at first glance.

Not to be despised are the "news pictures", which have been hailed in certain quarters as the newspapers of the future. The faults of these weekly and daily records of contemporaneous events throughout the world are manifold, perhaps, and glaring; but so are the faults of newspapers, yet no one condemns journalism on account of them. Is it not evident that these pictures will play some part in the spread of a sense of the homely ties that bind all peoples together? Here is surely an agent of the wider democracy.

Travel pictures are of undoubted value in supplementing and completing studies in geography and ethnology, as well as in awakening interest in such studies; and this is quite apart from their value in quickening the imagination. Pictures of this kind seem really to belong to both groups, and to appeal as much to the imagination as to the intelligence. Who, for example, could see the pictures of the Scott expedition and not feel that he had, in the spirit, been a part of that splendid adventure, the last of the great romantic quests that was left in the world? Who can sit before the film and see the exotic and languorous beauties of some

South Sea island without feeling the spirit of the Lotos-eaters stir within him?

This brings us naturally to a consideration of the aesthetic aspect of the motion picture. A picture may be of value aesthetically either on account of the primarily imaginative appeal of its subject matter, or because it possesses real beauty of line, color, and composition. Pictures of this sort, be it noted, are few; but that they have already been made at all, given the unfavorable conditions obtaining in the film world, speaks well for their future development, when those conditions shall have been changed. Indeed, who knows but that we have here a great new art-form, now passing through its crude and "archaic" stage, later to develop into an instrument fitted to convey the artistic messages of future masters? Lest I be written down fantastic, let me call your attention to certain phases of the matter.

Aesthetically, I suppose, the motion picture is much more closely related to the dance than to the drama; and yet this statement would only be made by an aesthetician. For most people, the film is drama, all the more real, probably, because uninterrupted by the spoken word. The film has all the narrative and dramatic power of the play, and at the same time *can* have the expressive power of the dance. May it not be regarded as a new synthesis of the vital elements in these traditional art-forms? Again, is it not a nearly perfect balance between the plastic and the pictorial? Are there not plain analogies between its development, even thus far, and the much slower development of other great art-forms?

I realize what debatable ground I am treading upon here, and since this question has no immediate bearing upon the main point involved, I shall not press it. The one thing, however, which I insist upon is this: Do not expect from the motion picture the same imaginative appeal that any other art makes, since it is different in its method from all of them; and since it may be the embryonic form of a great new Art, that shall catch man's imagination from a new angle and with a new effectiveness.

The real point at issue, as I understand it, in this connection, is this: Does the motion picture stimulate the imagination beneficially, or does it, because of its primarily realistic method and sensory appeal, stultify the real imaginative qualities? The method of the motion picture is no more realistic than that of the drama or painting or sculpture; so the real quarrel here is between the film and the printed page; and the crux of the matter is the effect on the child mind.

I am now about to make a bold statement, but I ask your second thought before you say "Thumbs down". I contend that the adolescent imagination is more effectively stirred and quickened by the "Julius Caesar" film that was lately shown in Boston, than by the reading either of the "Commentaries" or Shakespeare's "Caesar," (and for good measure let us include Shaw's!) Not for the immature mind is the humanity and tragic irony of the play, nor the subtle flavor of the man that pervades the war-books; but what marvelous vistas the actual Caesar opened to view, when he appeared on the screen, and disappeared; and what a tide of conjecture about his personality and his spirit flowed over the spectator! Of what consequence are the slight anachronisms and inconsistencies that, unfortunately, marred the film, beside the half-guessed mysteries that will always be associated with the name Caesar in the minds of the imaginative children who saw that film?

Now unfortunately, the "Caesar" film stands practically alone in this category. The pioneer in the new field of better and worthier films, was the "Quo Vadis" picture. Of this, and of the many similar "dramatizations" that have followed it, such as "Les Miserables", "The Last Days of Pompeii", "The Old Curiosity Shop", and others, we may say, I think, that while they do no harm to the imaginative faculties, still there is no particular inspiration to be found in them; and for the reason that they are translations into another art medium of material which is best adapted to its original form. This much good they may, and undoubtedly do, accomplish; they stimulate interest in their originals. There may, however, be cases in which the film translation would have more validity than the original, since artists are not always infallible in their choice of media and forms. Again, the film translation might fill a very desirable place in spreading the spirit of its original, even though not rendering it exactly. For example, the gorgeous mosaic of Flaubert's "Salammbô" is not accessible to all of us, in the fulness of its stylistic pomp; but who would not enjoy an adequately and sumptuously staged film-treatment of the story?

I realize that I have only begun to outline my subject, and there are questions involved in it, such as the use of motion-pictures in formal teaching, that I have not even touched. However, if I have given one teacher reason for pause and a moment's reflection, then this sketch has not been in vain. It is for you, representatives of the community's culture, to assert the rights of that culture in the

shaping of this new thing under the sun, the motion-picture. It is for you, not to stand idly by and see it perverted as it has been in the past perverted, but to ennoble it, and utilize it for every possible good.

EDITORIAL NOTES

The English Leaflet is published by the New England Association of Teachers of English, every month except July, August, and September. Subscription price, One Dollar. Entered as second class matter May 1, 1914, at the postoffice at Boston, Mass., under the act of March 3, 1879.

DECEMBER FIFTH AT TREMONT TEMPLE

MOTION PICTURES AND THEIR EFFECT ON ENGLISH TEACHING

Mr. Spaulding, who contributes this *Leaflet*, has seen the Moving Pictures from the commercial side. His experience has not blinded him to their Educational possibilities.

Within the next decade the Moving Pictures will be the indispensable adjunct of every Teacher and Educational Lecturer. On the public platform the cinematograph will inevitably have its recognized place, and it may even invade the pulpit. As the attention and interest of educators are more and more drawn to its merits, the future usefulness of the educational cinematograph bids fair to surpass the predictions of its most sanguine advocates.

From report of the U. S. Department of Education.

MOTION PICTURES AGAIN

As the members of the Executive Committee of this Association go more deeply into their investigation of the moving-picture business they become more and more deeply convinced of its varied possibilities. When financial interests are willing to expend \$250,000 in the production of D'Annunzio's *Cabiria*, and similar amounts for *Les Misérables*, *Quo Vadis*, and other classic stories—when we realize their willingness to take such ventures in reproducing these novels so that one may grasp the dramatic sequence in a single afternoon or evening, we begin to question the future status of books and the definiteness of their appeal.

Most of us were trained in a former school—a school that prided itself in its quiet seclusion, its cloistered classicism, its deviceless environment. Our tastes, accordingly, are quieter, graver, more literary—we believe—than those we are trying to develop. Do conditions not call—and call urgently—for re-adjustment? Must we not accept these newer forces in our social life as powerful agencies for good or for evil and do our part in directing these forces into proper channels? To do otherwise is to miss the lesson of *Milestones*—to miss the opportunity for progress.

We are still groping. The message has come to us in cryptic form, and the key to the cipher is not yet at hand. As we meet in conference and exchange experiences may we not perhaps see our views enlarging and our convictions forming? With enlarged views and formed convictions we may perhaps be agents in making the best potentialities of the cinematograph prevail.

CLASS QUESTIONING

One of the members of our Association has been having a good time in developing class-questioning. A senior division studying *Comus* grew a bit inert. How to overcome this inertness? What would urge the students to get at the heart of the passage—to grasp the poet's message in whole and in part? Why not adopt some method that would place the responsibility of this wholly upon the students? This teacher remembered his early high-school teaching experience when he taught seven different subjects a day, got out of his school room at five o'clock, and sat up till midnight studying his lessons--*getting* them, too, for that was his business, now that his college days were over.

Mulling over these more or less vaguely connected facts he perfected his device and forthwith applied it. It was simple. Here is what he said to his class:

"To-morrow we'll take three hundred more lines in *Comus*, but I'm not going to question you—you're to question each other. One of you will be called up to read a passage, and after the reading the rest of you are to ask such questions as will bring out the meaning of the passage as a whole and the meaning of the separate words and phrases in particular. Be able to explain the allusions, of course; but don't forget such questions as this: Does *Comus* really change his costume? Or is the change supposedly wrought by

supernatural means? And each of you because you may be the reader—and hence the *teacher*—will have to master all these varied details. Write out your questions for this first day at least—perhaps we shall not do that to-morrow. And remember it's just as much your business as a non-reader to *ask* these questions as it is your business as a reader to *answer* questions”.

Next day every one was on the *qui vive*. Paul Briton came before the class and read the first designated passage while the rest of the members sat eager, with closed books, gathering new ideas from Briton's sympathetic interpretation and storing up the questions which they were to fling forth when time for the assault arrived. The assault began the moment the reader came to the end. Almost simultaneously the class arose, and at once Briton—standing erectly before his mates—called upon Leonard who put his question, which was promptly answered. Immediately Briton called upon some one else. He answered the question put to him, and at once called upon a third student. And thus he stood answering the various questions that assailed him. Some he disposed of with a single word; others required fuller explanation. One he could not answer, but he got the information from a volunteer. No one lagged. Every one said his say. Naturally there were some disagreements, but these were quickly settled—generally without the teacher's interference.

Always, however, the sensitive teacher knows when to step into the breach, when to interpose the right word, when to quit hearing a recitation and to do constructive teaching.

The device we have outlined is based upon the soundest of pedagogical principles,—*Develop the pupil by giving him responsibility*. Under the workings of the device no one knew when he would be called upon to be the teacher and answer the fusillade of varied questions. There was then no escape. Nor was there escape as a questioner either—for sins of omission were easily noted and quickly chalked. Not many students will shrink from responsibility when such responsibility is wisely imposed and where failure brings immediate exposure. In dealing with corporations we have learned that personal responsibility and publicity lessen graft; in education we may learn that they lessen idleness and languorous dawdling. All this suggests an inquiry. Aren't we in high school a bit afraid of device? We condemn our pupils for being too sophisticated while at the same time in practice the method that leads to further sophistication—the sophistication of college method and col-

lege decorum. The result of such relapse is that we are almost as poor teachers as the poor college professors themselves. We need to visit the grammar grades more frequently—for there the better teaching is being done—more virile, more searching, more individual, more deviceful.

Selected Poems and Tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Edited by Roscoe Gilmore Stott, Eastern Kentucky Normal School. American Book Company.

Shakespeare's *Henry V.* Edited by Frederick Houk Law, the Stuyvesant High School, City of New York. American Book Company.

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels.* Edited by Charles Robert Gaston, Richmond Hill High School, City of New York. American Book Company.

Bunyan's *The Pilgrims Progress.* Edited by Grace L. Jones and Marguerite I. Arnold, Columbus School for Girls, Columbus, Ohio. American Book Company.

Macaulay's *Speeches on Copyright* and Lincoln's *Address at Cooper Union.* Edited by L. A. Pittenger, Kent Normal School, Kent, Ohio. American Book Company.

Brigg's *A Laboratory Manual of Letters.* By Thomas H. Briggs, Teachers College, Columbia University. Ginn and Company.

Burn's *Complete Poems.* Students' Cambridge Edition. Houghton, Mifflin Company.

The publishers of the Cambridge edition of poets have met the demand for a cheaper edition, such as will be suitable to school and college classes. Without sacrifice of material and with little diminution of mechanical excellence, the *Students' Edition* has been materially reduced in price.

A Book of English Essays. Selected and edited by C. T. Winchester, Wesleyan University. Henry Holt and Company.

Tales and Verse from Sir Walter Scott. Chosen and arranged by Hanson H. Webster and Fanny E. Coe. Ginn and Company.

THE TEACHING OF POETRY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL By A. H. R. Fairchild.

This book offers practical aid for the improvement of English teaching, by presenting outlines and suggestions which a successful teacher uses in his own classroom work. (To be published in December). **Riverside Educational Monographs. 60 cents net. Postpaid.**

Other Helpful Monographs

CAMPAGNAC'S TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

PALMER'S SELF-CULTIVATION IN ENGLISH 35 cents net. Postpaid.

35 cents net. Postpaid.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
4 PARK STREET BOSTON, MASS.

A NEW HITCHCOCK BOOK

New Practice Book in English Composition

By ALFRED HITCHCOCK, Head of the English Department in the Hartford Public High School. 447 pp. 12 mo. \$1.10.

This is similar in plan to the author's earlier manual, the **Enlarged Practice Book**. Its exercises, however, provide fresh material, and other new features are:—

A chapter on planning longer compositions.

An entirely new and somewhat unusual chapter on the Paragraph.

A more extended treatment of grammar.

A fuller treatment of letter-writing with more attention to business correspondence.

Illustrations in color for work in Description.

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

34 West 33rd Street
NEW YORK

6 Park Street
BOSTON

623 So. Wabash Ave.
CHICAGO

WEBSTER'S SECONDARY-SCHOOL DICTIONARY

Octavo. 864 pp. \$1.50. Indexed, \$1.80

Based on the New International Dictionary. This new dictionary presents over 70,000 words and phrases, and contains more than 1,000 illustrations. It is the largest WEBSTER DICTIONARY ever offered for the price. It meets all needs of students, from grammar school to college; and is equally adapted to office and home use.

Specimen page circular sent on request.

AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

New York

Cincinnati

Chicago

Boston



Extracts from letters received about

Davis and Lingham's



Business English and Correspondence

"Business English and Correspondence is original and stimulating in method, and it is besides packed full of information which will be invaluable to the young people going out from our schools into the business world."

"I gladly welcome the type of book you have made. It is in the right direction and a thoroughly constructive piece of work."

"Business English and Correspondence seems to be very complete and is a much better text on the subject than I have seen before. I particularly like the introduction of rules for spelling and composition, so often neglected by writers on commercial subjects."

Write us if you are interested in a practical text of this kind.



GINN AND COMPANY: Publishers

29 Beacon Street, Boston



1000 Review Questions in English A. and B.

Compiled from recent College Entrance Examinations.

500 QUESTIONS ON ENGLISH A. \$ 0.40

500 QUESTIONS ON ENGLISH B. \$ 0.40

Liberal Discounts. Sample copies half price.

Used in 200 leading college preparatory schools.

The most successful book of its kind published.

MASSEE'S NEW LESSON ASSIGNMENT BOOK \$ 0.10

Simplifies all school work. One assignment book fastened to each text book saves much friction and many annoyances.

W. Wellington Masse, Ph. D.

MASSEE COUNTRY SCHOOL.

(Lawrence Park,) Bronxville, N. Y.

Motion Pictures Without Risk

For Home, Church, Y. M. C. A., Sunday
School Social Service Work



OUR films are absolutely non-inflammable—no booth or other apparatus required—no extra insurance, no gas tanks—but a practical, absolutely safe machine, that can be used with ordinary electric light socket or run by hand or batteries. So simple anyone may operate it and give sharp, clear pictures any size up to 6x8 feet.

THE PATHESCOPE

is made by Pathe Freres, the world-known manufacturers of the finest moving pictures. Schools, churches and clubs may easily make the Pathescope pay for itself in a short time. Your choice of over 700 subjects now ready.

Write Dept. A. for full information or call and
see the Pathescope in operation

The Pathescope Co.

25 ARCH ST. = = BOSTON